

Dennis "Digger" Digenan  
1950-2009



Dennis Digenan, age 59, a 30-year teacher and FFA advisor for Elko County School District, passed away on May 13th, 2009, following a courageous battle with brain cancer. His wish of dying at home with his family and friends was fulfilled.

He was born on January 3, 1950, to Mildred and the late John Digenan in San Diego, California. He was raised on a farm in Lakeside, California, graduating from El Cajon High School in 1968. Although very active in FFA and agriculture in high school, he also played football, which took him to Grossmont College where he played for 2 years. Following a brief stint at San Diego State University, Digger finished out his college career at Cal-Poly San Luis Obispo. Following the completion of his bachelor's degree in

Animal Science, he obtained a master's degree in Agriculture Education. During his college career, Digger was highly accomplished in a wide variety of agriculture avenues. Following his graduation from Cal-Poly in 1978, Digger enthusiastically served his students and the teaching profession for thirty years, retiring in July of 2008. Following 15 years at Wells High School, Digger transferred to establish the FFA program at the newly built Spring Creek High School. His teams and students were consistently successful at the county, state and national levels. His forte was always individualizing instruction to meet the needs of each student, which led to his successful teaching style. Digger has humbly and quietly been the recipient of several state and regional awards throughout his career. These include the Nevada State High School Teacher of the Year in 2000 and the Reno-Gazette Journal Outstanding Educator Award in 2000. His vocational and agriculture-specific awards have come at the local, state, regional and national level consistently over his career. He belonged to every vocational and agricultural organization involved with agricultural and vocational education. His desire to improve in knowledge and teaching skills was never ending. In 1997, he co-authored a successful vocational youth group funding bill for the Nevada Legislature which has funded approximately \$200,000 every year for the five Nevada Career and Technical Student Organizations. His greatest contributions and accomplishments were exemplified in the academic and personal growth and success of his students. He measured his success as a teacher by the success of his former students upon leaving his FFA program.

Digger's favorite hobby, first and foremost, was spending time with his children, Shay and Garrett. Summer trips including Yellowstone Park, the Oregon Coast, Texas and Lamoille Canyon outings were among his favorites. Mentoring other youngsters preparing to meet the challenges of adult life, (teaching), was his other favorite pastime. His personal life also revolved around education. There was always a lesson to be learned and it often came in humorous form, which created a memory for the lucky recipient of Dig's advice.

Digger is survived by his wife, Alice, his son, Garrett, his daughter, Shay; mother, Mildred Digenan; his sisters, Marguerite, Kathleen and Patricia Digenan; his brother, John (his children, Andrea, Justin, Jason, John and Jacob); his father-in-law and close friend, Leland Campsey; his mother-in-law, Sarah Sweetwater; his uncle Fritz Hartung

(Betty) children (Mindy and Heidi); his sister-in-law, Keri Meranda (Mark) children (Mitch and Camille); his sister-in-law, Melissa Cook (Rob), children (Calvin, Cosette and Carys). He is further survived by nieces, nephews and other relatives. His fraternity of close friends over the years was an important part of his extended family. He was preceded in death by his father, John Digenan and several aunts and uncles.

Funeral services for Digger will be Tuesday, May 19th, at 4 p.m., at St. Joseph's Catholic Church at 990 Highland Drive in Elko, Nevada. The Deacon Cecil Gingerich will officiate. Friends and relatives are also welcome at a viewing on Monday, May 18th, 5-7 P.M. at Burns Funeral Home on Burns Road in Elko, Nevada. A family graveside service will be held on Wednesday, May 20th.

In lieu of flowers, scholarships have been established at Wells High School and Spring Creek High School for outstanding FFA students in memory of Digger. An account has been established at Wells Fargo Bank in Elko entitled The Dennis Digenan Memorial Scholarship.

Digger will be greatly missed not only by his family and close friends, but by the students he influenced, the colleagues he worked with and all fortunate enough to have crossed paths with him somewhere along the way.